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AMERICAN POLICY AND EUROPEAN OPINION

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What I wish to suggest in this paper is that the European attitude towards America, what Europe thinks of us, hopes of us, and fears from us, should be one of the decisive factors in determining not only how we should arm but also what foreign policy we should pursue. No nation can be a law unto itself, for none is supreme; each nation must more or less accommodate its policy to the policy of other powerful nations. Europe being hard-pressed and quite naturally timorous and suspicious, will not be won over to any vague, and therefore potentially ambitious and aggressive American policy, easy formulae or pacific protestations. She will judge us by the actual course of our international action. Our safety and our peace, therefore, lie in defining our policy, in sharply delimiting it, in refraining from mere instinctive national grabbing, in withholding support from European coalitions which seek selfish aims, in joining with any coalition which seeks peace on the basis of an orderly, progressive change and growth of Europe and the world. Our true policy, dictated alike by our own needs and the state of mind of Europe, lies in consciously promoting international law and morality and in facilitating joint international action. If we can gradually translate this ideal into a realistic and concrete national policy, we shall be fulfilling the hopes of millions of liberal-minded Europeans, who in the midst of the fatal strife long for its cessation, and look for leadership to the nation which is freest from traditions of animosity, which has least to gain from war, and not least to gain from enduring peace.

This belief that America in its foreign policy must take into account European opinion has long been ignored. In our robustious days a few generations ago, when we were more aggressive and provincial than we now are, to have given weight to what Europe might think of any action we chose to take would have seemed absurdly irrelevant. What we thought of Europe's good opinion was demonstrated by the character of the diplomats we sent to her courts. Let Europe concern herself with her own petty squabbles, her own

parochial preoccupations, and leave us Americans to the fulfillment of our magnificent national destiny. We were great believers in the doctrine that Europe should mind her own business.

It is not difficult to discover the cause of the change in our attitude. Commercially and intellectually we are now tightly bound to Europe, and we are not immune even from the danger of military or naval pressure. We are beginning to realize that what Europe expects of us is an important part of our national environment and is, or should be, a condition of our national action. Whether we like it or not, we cannot but recognize that though we ourselves are potentially strong, the real power in this world lies in Europe. Her more than four hundred million inhabitants, her stupendous wealth, her keen intelligence, her secure domination of outlying colonies in other continents, give her a collective power almost as much greater than ours as ours is greater than Mexico's. In the past this immense might of Europe has been concealed by a division of the continent into two almost equal hostile groups, which has enabled us to oppose our own unity to Europe's weakened duality. But division and union, coalition and mutual hostility are in their essence transitory, and in our relations to Europe we must consider the possibility of those nations ranging themselves in combinations which will be far more effective than any today in exerting influence and pressure upon our own development. We can no longer disregard Europe's attitude towards America.

Our new plans of armament, present and prospective, add to Europe's justified interest in American intentions. We shall be *naïve* if we conclude that we may arm as heavily as we wish and still leave Europe unconcerned. Even in the midst of the present world-conflict, in which ulterior considerations break down under the pressure of the immediate, all European chancelleries must be giving earnest thought to our projected preparations and must be considering how this increased military strength of ours will affect their own ambitions and their own national security. For it is a commonplace that no nation arms for the sole pleasure of seeing its citizens in uniform but only for national purposes and, constructively at least, against some other nation. England felt herself menaced by the German navy despite pacific German assurances, just as Germany felt herself menaced by the Russian army. Whom then, the European asks, does the American armament imperil?

Whom does it aid? What ambitions of what power must be curtailed to prevent our force being added to already antagonistic forces? The entrance of this wealthy and powerful nation into world politics is of agonizing concern to European nations, which must scheme and contrive and fight to hold their place in the world.

It is in vain that we shall hope to allay these fears by declaring that our new armaments are purely defensive. Diplomatic protestations are cheap; all armaments, all wars, all acts of aggression, even the baldest, are called defensive. Germany, Austria, England, Russia, claim today that they are fighting in self-defense, as we also claimed, when in 1846 we forced war upon Mexico. But a defense of rights which are not admitted by an opponent, is either defense or aggression according to the point of view. In what, Europe may ask, will American defense consist? Are Americans solely to defend their continental territory and their island possessions? Or are they to defend the open door in China, the freedom of the seas, the integrity of small nations, the indiscretions of a Venezuela, the financial irregularities of, let us say, an Ecuador or Peru? A plea of self-defense may cover an infinity of shadowy pretensions and of very real aggressions.

Nor is it to be expected that the astute gentlemen who conduct European foreign affairs will construe our motives with excessive charity or interpret our diplomacy in terms of our own history primers. Already many of them think of our political leaders as very concrete, prescient and ruthless, if heavy-handed, statesmen. They read in our history of aggressions against Spain, Mexico and Colombia; of promises not always kept; of treaties not always scrupulously maintained, and note with envy the immensity and supreme ease of our territorial expansion. They ascribe to us more foresight than we possess, not realizing how often we have happily blundered into success, how often we have pursued *Realpolitik* in our sleep. "We Germans," a Berlin professor recently assured me, "write fat volumes about *Realpolitik* but understand it no better than babies in a nursery." "You Americans," he added, I thought enviously, "understand it far too well to talk about it."

In other words, our new power, expressed in military terms, will, unless we are on our guard, prove a source of peril. Our defensive armaments may be used for frankly aggressive purposes, and will be dangerous in proportion as they are susceptible of such

use. This menace of our new armament lies not only in the fears which it may arouse in Europe but also in the hopes and ambitions it may awaken in the breast of some of our own citizens. We cannot, of course, avoid the resultant peril by arming inadequately instead of adequately. Though there may be wisdom in avoiding quarrels there is surely none in entering upon conflicts unprepared. Either we should declare our intention not to resist at all or should, while minimizing the chances of strife, make such preparations for resistance as the balance in power between our probable enemies and our probable allies would indicate as necessary. Our true safety does not lie in disbanding an army or dismantling a navy, because it has latent aggressive capabilities, but in a formulation of a reasonable, restrained and completely unambiguous foreign policy. We shall be safer, and shall preserve a wider latitude of action, if Europe knows exactly where we stand.

A few considerations will illustrate the danger of an instinctive, unforeseen and ambiguous policy. If, for example, Great Britain infers from presidential and other utterances that we are intent upon outbuilding her navy, and therefore undermining her security, may she not conceivably be tempted to precipitate a conflict at a moment favorable to her? If we menace her with undefined, grandiose plans, need she be over-solicitous in her support of us either against European or Asiatic foes? Again, there is a highly important but still nebulous American policy, which all Americans are willing to die for but few Americans are willing to study and understand. Now if the Monroe Doctrine is ever so twisted as to suggest a policy of "the inside track" in Latin America, by which our own citizens will be favored with concessions, privileges and trade opportunities to the detriment of Europe, may we not be confronted with a coalition of nations, intent on keeping us within bounds, as Japan was confronted in 1895 by Germany, Russia and France? I do not insist that any of these events is probable, but only that their probability is enhanced by any vagueness or incertitude of foreign policy, that makes Europe apprehensive.

On the other hand, a mere definition of policy, if the policy is adventurous and stalking, is quite as little likely to bring about peace or security. To announce far-reaching though definite plans of expansion is merely to increase and unite your enemies. Nor is a policy of joint action with one or another of the two European

coalitions desirable or peace-furthering, if such a coalition is aimed only at the perpetual maintenance of the *status quo* and at the repression of other nations, which require expansion. Peace cannot be secured by embalming the world. You cannot stop progress as you stop a watch. Some of the nations will grow faster than others; trade routes will change; the technique of production, the range of consumption, the source of supply of prime raw materials will change, and with these transformations will come new demands on the part of nations, and new alignments. The result will be that any merely conservative coalition with its static conception of the world will burst asunder. It is not because it seems bold that a policy of union with one or another of the European coalitions is, if possible, to be avoided. Boldness is often the safest course. There are, however, two considerations which should make us hesitate before entering upon such hostile coalitions. The first is the indefiniteness and infinite expansibility of their nationalistic aims, in which we Americans may have no interest; the second is the possibility that such coalitions will prove merely repressive, static and reactionary, and will be broken up again into a new balance of powers, in which we shall be compelled to take our place and assume unnecessarily heavy obligations. By no such methods can we secure our peace and bring our national aims into some sort of conformity with the best opinion of Europe. What we might be driven to do by a sudden national peril, what alliances we might then have to make or responsibilities accept, is apart from the question. If, however, we retain our present latitude of choice we should not pursue a policy which will purchase temporary stability at the expense of future wars and continual alarms. There is no gain in substituting a new balance for the old, in converting the delicate balance of Europe into an equally delicate balance of all the world.

A higher ideal, which sustains even in this war the peoples of Europe, is that of a coalition, open to all powers, a coalition which will be a true concert, and will seek not only immediate peace, but such a governance of the world, such a continuous and progressive adjustment of the rival economic and other interests of the nations as will give to each some part at least of its reasonable demands, and thus tend to reverse the motives pushing towards war. Our own policy, while not surrendering vital national interests, should define them, bring them into some measure of harmony with the interests

of other powers, and aid in the upbuilding of an international system, which, though doubtless not immediately possible, lies in the direction in which great economic world forces are today developing.

What I am here proposing is admittedly an ideal and a general direction and not in any sense a ready-to-use plan, which will give us peace without effort. I have no such plan to propose, and if I had, I should be merely adding to the hundreds of interesting and suggestive expedients, daily evolved. It is easy to hit upon expedients, which the world would be the better for adopting, but it is far less easy to convert hundreds of millions of people to a willingness to make the necessary sacrifices and concessions, without which no such plan is practicable. What is needed in America is not an excellent scheme, which will tell us in advance what we should do in each case as it arises, but a change in our outlook, an end to our sense of immunity and moral aloofness, a growth in a community of sentiment with Europe, a conviction that a juster, more plastic and more secure international constitution is in our own interest as also of Europe. We shall advance along these lines only as there develops in America a resolute determination to bring our vague longings for peace and international justice into harmony with our own national interests, and to translate these longings into the exertion by the United States of a steady influence upon the creation of sound international sentiment and durable international institutions.

To ignore the obstacles is to hamper the already difficult realization of this ideal. Deep-lying international conflicts, economic and racial, are innumerable. The privilege of developing backward countries, the right of access to the sea, the right of small national groups to autonomy or even to independence, the right of over-populated peoples to emigrate, the right of small nations to be safeguarded from attack—all these involve perplexing conflicts of principle and interest. It is fair for us to guarantee Belgium's neutrality, to secure a revision of the law of the sea, to urge joint government by the powers of new colonial acquisitions. But each of these problems is itself immensely complicated and has troublesome implications and quite unexpected reactions, and in each case our high ideal must be brought to the level of the practicable. We must labor jointly in such enterprises with other nations. We cannot do it alone. We dare not be merely Quixotic,

merely meddlesome, a censor of the world's morals, a voice crying aloud in the wilderness. Within these limitations, however, there is a wide range of international relations, within which we may make our influence felt.

The age of *laissez-faire*, of non-interference between the nations, is passing. What were once internal problems are today of world concern. The present evils are recognized; the remedies also are vaguely perceived. What is needed is a composition of rival national claims, the wider application of the principle of joint use, the realization that after all the common interests of the nations which are endangered by a world war do in the main outweigh the divisive interests. But to cement these international liens, which beneath the surface are being formed out of the economic necessities of the age, some nation must take the initiative.

This natural leadership, I conceive, falls to America, not because we are better or wiser than others, but because we are the child of all the peoples with allegiance to all, a nation without deep inherited hatreds, economically self-poised, comparatively satisfied, and inspired by ideals of democracy and peace.